

DIVISION OF SERVICES FOR THE BLIND
BOARD MEETING MINUTES
FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 11, 2009

DSB BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT

Sharon Berry
Sandra Edwards
Anglyn Franquemont
Gary Hall
Irma Nelson
Dickie Walker

EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS PRESENT

Thomas Bradford
Larry Dickerson
Jim Hill
Ann Moore

DSB BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT

Lions Representative (vacant)

EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS ABSENT

Kara Aaron

DHS Representative: None

Attorney General's Office Representative: Erica Gee

Governor's Office Representative: None

DSB Staff Present: Lee Barnes, Dorothy Brooks, Mary Cabaniss, Charlie Cain-Davis, Kandy Cayce, Mary Douglas, Robert Lamb, Ginny McWilliams, Katy Morris, Jim Pearson, Kena Sabb, Tina Shelby, Lou Talley, Tanya VanHouten, Coral Virden, Donna Walker, Cassondra Williams, Dwana Williams

CALL TO ORDER. Chairman Mrs. Sharon Berry called the meeting to order.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA. Motion was made by Ms. Irma Nelson to approve the agenda. Mr. Dickie Walker seconded the motion. ***Motion passed.***

WELCOME TO NEW BOARD MEMBERS. The board chairman welcomed new board members Mr. Gary Hall, National Federation of the Blind of Arkansas representative; Dr. Larry Dickerson, Executive Director of Lions World Services for the Blind; Mr. Thomas Bradford, Arkansas Association of Blind Business Enterprise Managers representative; and Ms. Sandra Edwards, Arkansas Chapter of American Council of the Blind representative.

APPROVAL OF 06/12/09 MINUTES. Motion was made by Mr. Dickie Walker to approve the minutes. Mrs. Anglyn Franquemont seconded the motion. ***Motion passed.***

INTRODUCTIONS. All persons in attendance introduced themselves.

DSB DIRECTOR'S REPORT –

NATIONAL ISSUES:

- On July 30 the United States signed a Convention on the Rights of Persons With Disabilities. The purpose was to recognize the inherent dignity, worth and independence of persons with disabilities.
- Quiet Cars. Last meeting, HR 734, known as the Pedestrian Safety Enhancement Act had 124 supporting sponsors in the House. It is now up to 136. Its companion bill, S841 in the Senate, had 5 Signatures and is now up to 13.
- Technology Access HR 3101, termed “The 21st Century Communication and Video Accessibility Act is under consideration, and NFB addressed Congress on the issue yesterday emphasizing the importance of building access into technology, rather than retrofitting later.

STATE ISSUES:

- Arkansas Workforce Investment Board (AWIB). In compliance with federal mandate, DSB worked closely with DHS and the Governor’s Office to pass legislation to add the DSB Director to the state Workforce Investment Board. That legislation also restructured the WIB to focus on business as the ultimate consumer of workforce activities. The concept is to begin with business as a customer, and to design services for DSB consumers that arm them with the skill sets in high demand by business.
- Kiosks. DSB has completed the first stage of the installation of the 10 accessible computer kiosks in the designated workforce centers. I recently visited the Little Rock Workforce Center location Kiosk and discovered that, while the computer equipment with JAWS was there, the workforce staff was not sufficiently trained to be able to assist consumers. DSB is scheduling initial training for Workforce staff and will follow up with brief written instructions so that the kiosks can continue to function over time as turnover occurs.
- State Independent Living Council (SILC). Federal law requires each state to have an Independent Living Council to ensure Independent Living (IL) funds were used in a manner responding to consumer needs. In Arkansas, this Council had never been fully appointed to comply with its Executive Order, and federal Rehabilitation Services assigned DSB and Arkansas Rehabilitation Services (ARS) to work to correct this problem. After recruiting participants and working at

STATE ISSUES (continued):

length with the Governor's Office, we were recently able to certify to RSA that the appointments have been made and the Council is currently properly constituted.

- Institutions of Higher Education. DSB has completed 31 of the 33 federally required interagency agreements with Arkansas public Institutions of Higher Education. The purpose is to ensure that the representatives of both the institution and DSB clearly know who is responsible for identified services to DSB consumers. We are anticipating receipt of the last two signatures by September 30.
- Blindness Awareness Day. This recognition event will be held at the state Capitol October 15. I sent a general email out to let all the agencies involved make plans. We have two tables reserved for DSB and ten additional tables. We want to have a good turn out so please let us know if you will participate.
- Transition Summit. The Transition Summit will be held October 1. It is a joint effort between Education, Special Education and all of the partner agencies that provide services to transition-age youth, which can begin at 14 in the rehab environment.
- Supportive Employment Initiative. DSB continues to work on supportive employment with ARS, DHS Behavioral Health, Developmental Disability Services and Education. The goal is to strengthen the capacity of service providers across the state to deliver supportive services to persons with significant disabilities in addition to blindness, in the months and years after DSB services have ended.

DIVISION ISSUES:

- State Plan. DSB has completed the state plan and anticipates RSA approval by September 30th. It was a very intense, detailed planning process, but a great learning opportunity. One of the things that we really connected with in the strategic planning process is the need to overtly schedule agency actions to implement the assurances we have given RSA in the state plan.
- Caseload Standards. As part of the implementation of the strategic plan, DSB has re-established *minimum individual caseload standards*, so that the achievement of the overall VR performance standards for the division does not continue to be dependent upon the exceptional success of the same high-performing veteran

DIVISION ISSUES (continued):

- counselors year after year. It is inevitable that DSB will lose these veterans all too soon to retirement, and without equitable standards, good supervision, and a strong sense of individual accountability, new staff members will be ill-prepared to fill the performance void left by the retirees. Of further concern is the fact that meeting federal performance standards is a prerequisite of funding.
- Restructuring of Territories. In response to needs assessment, DSB is taking a good hard look at how the territories are assigned, respecting population density, travel time, etc. to make territories more equitable and still responsive to consumer needs. This restructuring of territories ties closely with our recent Accountability Training at Winrock, sponsored by the Technical Assistance Continuing Education (TACE) program. It was tough information to consume, but extremely well received and much needed.
 - Economic Stimulus. DSB continues to implement the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) initiatives. These include: hiring a ***job developer and job coach*** in each of the five DSB regions; moving to upgrade our ***client data information system*** to net based, so Counselors and Teachers will be able to conduct business with and on behalf of consumers from anywhere in the state; adding ***NFB Newslines*** to the services offered by the Arkansas Information Reading Services and expanding our customized services, such as emergency information, voter access, etc., in local areas; establishing a ***Qualified Blind Apprentice*** Program to prepare and place consumers in targeted state jobs under a cooperative program with Executive Branch agencies; conducting ***100% case record audit*** in preparation for future federal review; ***upgrading vending equipment*** to better serve customers and promote future locations; expanding the ***DSB fleet*** to ensure available transportation for service delivery by both sighted and blind staff, and providing additional ***purchased services*** to meet consumer needs.
 - Annual Vendors Sales Seminar. The Licensed Blind Vendors had an outstanding annual meeting July 31-August 2. Mr. Thomas Bradford was elected as Chairman of the Committee of Licensed Blind Vendors, and Mr. Brent Philpot was named Vice-chair. DSB intends to make board orientation training available to the new officers before the next quarterly meeting.
 - Recruitment. Recruitment of new staff is an ongoing problem. The verbiage of the minimum qualifications written into the job specifications issued by OPM July 1 require certification of all DSB VR Counselors and Rehab Teachers. Routinely DSB is not able to recruit certified personnel in these specialty fields, and OPM has eliminated all non-certified categories for VR Counselor and Rehab Teacher.

DIVISION ISSUES (continued):

This leaves DSB in the position of being forced to recruit generic counselor and teacher personnel, which does not serve our consumers well and does not comply with assurances about specialized personnel under the state plan.

END OF DIRECTOR'S REPORT

APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR TO CONSUMER OF THE YEAR COMMITTEE –

Mrs. Sharon Berry appointed Mrs. Anglyn Franquemont as Chair. Ms. Sandra Edwards and Mr. Gary Hall will also serve on the committee. The committee will review the nominations and score them according to the board Consumer of the Year Guidelines.

EMPLOYEE OF THE YEAR COMMITTEE REPORT – Mr. Dickie Walker reported that the committee met, recorded all the nominations and voted. The winner in the clerical category is Ms. Paula Smith. The winner of the Direct Services category is Mr. Jimmy Jones. The winner of the Administrative Support Services category is Mrs. Gloria Mance. The overall winner is Mrs. Gloria Mance. The committee expressed congratulations to all winners.

DISCUSSION OF STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL (SRC) TRAINING

MODULES – Chairman Berry noted that she and ASB Superintendent Jim Hill attended the SRC Training conference in St. Louis last summer and were introduced to the SRC Module Training. They realized how valuable the information is to the role of any rehab board, and initially, Mrs. Berry sought board agreement to make the modules mandatory training for all board members. She emphasized that the training is easily accessible over the web and can be done at your leisure. She added that Mr. Walker has completed four modules and Mrs. Aaron has begun them. Mr. Walker stated he had learned a lot regarding standards. Mrs. Berry suggested that board members who did not have access to the internet could take the training in the DSB Tech lab. It was agreed that the board will incorporate the SRC modules into initial training for board members.

2009 NATIONAL CONVENTION REPORTS – Reports regarding the 2009 National Convention of ACB and NFB were submitted with the board packets. Mrs. McKinney expressed her appreciation to the board for allowing her to represent the board at the ACB National Convention in Orlando. Ms. Lori Hunter expressed her appreciation to the board for allowing her to represent the board at the NFB National Convention in Detroit.

ANNUAL VOTE ON BOARD REIMBURSEMENT – Mr. Dickie Walker motioned that the board members be reimbursed per state regulations for their costs incurred in attending board meetings. Ms. Irma Nelson seconded the motion. **Motion Passed.**

DISABILITY RIGHTS CENTER REPORT (DRC) – Mr. Eddie Miller reported that Disability Rights Center has submitted its new goals for approval by its board next week. Since school has started DRC is getting a lot of referrals on children who have disabilities and who are not getting the services that they need for school. Mr. Miller suggested that as DSB develops new field policies, it might be good to forward drafts to DRC (as is done by Arkansas Rehabilitation Services) to allow for preview and avoid any difference in interpretation of federal regulations later.

ARKANSAS INDEPENDENT LIVING COUNCIL REPORT (AILC) - No representative was present. A report was submitted with the board packet and is attached as a formal part of these minutes.

RECOGNITION OF PAST CHAIRMAN, MRS NOLA MCKINNEY – Mrs. McKinney has served on the DSB Board since 2001 representing the American Council of the Blind. She has been a real advocate for blind and visually impaired people and the Division of Services for the Blind. A plaque was presented to Mrs. McKinney in appreciation for her leadership and dedication as a member of the Division of Services for the Blind Board 2001 – 2009.

RECOGNITION OF MS. LORI HUNTER – A plaque was presented to Ms. Lori Hunter in appreciation for her leadership and dedication as a member of the Division of Services for the Blind Board 2005 – 2009.

CONSUMER INPUT – The *American Council of the Blind* state convention will be held May 7-8, 2010. ACB will also hold their Chapter picnic this Saturday and a fundraiser September 24 at the Mount Ida Methodist church at 6:30 p.m. It will be a Spaghetti dinner and concert. The *National Federation of the Blind* state convention will be held September 25-26, 2009 at the Little Rock Hilton. The speaker at the banquet will be Barbara Pierce, Editor of the Braille Monitor.

It was reported that a student from northwest Arkansas had recently lost her vision as a high school junior and was having difficulty adjusting. She was referred to the Jump Start Program and placed in a job trainee position. Her experience in Jump Start helped her greatly and gave her personal direction. This is only one success story of the benefit of DSB, ASB and ESVI collaborating together. There are many students out there throughout the state who have benefitted from the efforts of all these organizations and we are fortunate to have the cooperative efforts between our agencies and should try to expand that cooperation.

EXECUTIVE SESSION – The board adjourned into executive session to discuss the DSB Director's evaluation. The board reconvened and announced that the evaluation had been approved.

NEXT MEETING. The next regular quarterly board meeting will be held Friday, December 11, 2009, at 1:00 p.m. at the Department of Human Services, Donaghey Plaza South Building, First Floor, Conference Rooms A & B followed by the reception for the 2009 Consumer of the Year.

The meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,

Irma Nelson
Secretary